

Complex modifications of phraseological units and the ways of their translation

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Abstract. The article, firstly, presents the typology of modifications of phraseological units (PUs). Secondly, it outlines the main steps that have been taken by linguists to identify adequate ways of translating PU modifications from one language into another. Thirdly, it aims at analyzing functional equivalents of contextually modified PUs taken from the novel of Salman Rushdie *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The modifications under analysis are phraseological pun, extended phraseological metaphor and phraseological saturation of discourse.

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Introduction

Different types of PU modifications have been widely used by a lot of prominent writers and poets, and even general public; however, only the second half of the 20th century witnessed the appearance of the first researches proving the fact that PUs are not completely frozen expressions.

B.Frazer was among the first who explored the transformational potential of idioms, which, in his perception, differed widely [1]. He proposed a six-level scale:

- L6 – Unrestricted
- L5 – Reconstitution
- L4 – Extraction
- L3 – Permutation
- L2 – Insertion
- L1 – Adjunction
- L0 – Completely frozen

B.Frazer not only worked out the scale of transformational behaviour of idioms, which they might or might not undergo, he also incidentally drew attention to the stylistic effects that transformations of idioms can achieve.

The Russian School of Phraseology has always been very prolific in the field of investigation of contextual use of PUs. The first scientist who made a great contribution in this respect is A.Kunin [2-4]. It was he who introduced the terms “usual use” and “contextual use” of PUs and distinguished three types of phraseological context: inter-phrasal, phrasal and super-phrasal. The first one consists of a phraseological unit and its so-called actualizer expressed with the help of a word or word combination in the structure of a simple or compound (complex) sentence. The second one includes a PU and its actualizer expressed with the help of a sentence. Super-phrasal context presents a complex syntactical unit and consists of sentences united in semantic and syntactic relations.

A short survey of achievements of Russian scientists concerning different types of PU modifications is presented in the first part of the monograph of a group of researchers from Kazan federal university “Contextual Use of Phraseological Units” [5]. The book contains theoretical study and its practical implementation based on the investigation of different types of PU modifications in the English, Russian, German and Spanish languages and in different types of texts and genres: belles-léttres, mass media, and the so-called creolized texts, which are constituted by verbal and non-verbal signs (e.g. images).

Several types of PU modifications are studied in the monographic works of H.Burger [6], C.Fernando [7], W.Fleischer [8], R.Moon [9], A.Naciscione [10-11], S.Ptashnyk [12], J.Hoeksema and M.Sailer [13], etc.

In spite of the fact that we may encounter different terms to denote one and the same PU modification, modern achievements and the efforts of scientists working in the field of phraseology make it possible to distinguish the following PU modification types:

1. Substitution or replacement of a PU component(s);
2. Permutation;
3. Addition;
4. Insertion;
5. Cleft use, which is interrelated with insertion;
6. Deletion of a PU component or components, or ellipsis;
7. Phraseological allusion, which is closely connected with ellipsis;
8. Phraseological reiteration;
9. Phraseological pun;
10. Contamination of two PUs;
11. Extended phraseological metaphor;

12. Phraseological saturation of discourse.

The majority of scholars subdivide all these contextual modifications into two main types: semantic and structural-semantic. Semantic modifications, such as phraseological pun and extended metaphor occur without any changes in the form of a PU, they affect only the semantic aspect of the unit. Modifications of the second type involve the change in the structure of a PU thus making some alterations in its meaning.

Much attention was paid to the differentiation of such terms as phraseological transform, phraseological neologism and phraseological occasionalism in the article by D.Davletbaeva, A.Sadykova and E.Smirmova [14].

It is difficult to single out and analyze all the above-mentioned PU modifications because the process requires many data-based and corpus-based efforts, but it is much more difficult to translate them from one language into another.

Translation of PU modifications

The problem of the adequate translation of PU modifications may be considered to be in its infancy though the problem of interlanguage counterparts of PUs is analyzed in the majority of comparative works.

As it was previously stated by both of us [15], in W.Mieder's "International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology" [16], containing a short description of more than 10000 works of researchers from all over the world, we find an extremely limited number of works devoted to the problem of translating PU modifications, among them the articles of P.Mrazović [17], S.Mohr-Elfadl [18], I.Tanović [19] and E.Rechtsiegel [20].

P.Mrazović comes to the conclusion that there are substantial losses in rendering such types of PU modifications as phraseological pun, contamination and phraseological reiteration from one language into another. According to the author, modified PUs remain the stumbling block for interpreters and translators ninety-nine times out of a hundred [17].

The investigation of irony created by modified phrasemes in literary texts enabled S.Mohr-Elfadl to state that there is a great difficulty in rendering all components of phraseological meaning (denotational and connotational) of French stable expressions into English [18].

Even the title of the article of I.Tanović "Hard translatability" of phraseological units (based on the translation of works of Ivo Andric into Russian)" is a good witness of great obstacles which

translators face when they deal with modified PUs [19].

An obvious merit of E.Rechtsiegel's work is the description of the decoding possibility of PU transformations in translation if five translation possibilities are taken into account: purposeful language imitation of the initial language transformation, purposeful individual language transformation of the PU equivalent which serves as the basis of modification, descriptive translation with the help of separate lexical elements of the original text, translation without due regard for author's transformation, word for word translation [20].

The scholars from the Kazan School of Phraseology are also engaged in the process of finding the ways of adequate translation of modified PUs.

While analyzing the translation of transformed PUs in W. Shakespeare's works into Tatar R.Ayupova states that both translators, G.Shamukov and N.Isanbet, not only preserved all types of PU transformations in translation but were able to transfer the function of these transformations [21]. R.Ayupova's dissertation may be considered the first attempt to find out the influence of the mediator language (Russian) on the process of decoding PUs from one language (English) into another (Tatar). In the majority of cases the influence of the mediator language was felt rather vividly and it was proved that this influence helped Tatar translators to discern all the subtleties of Shakespeare's PU transformations and to choose the best way of their rendering into Tatar. Still it was found to become negative when Tatar translators were blindly copying Russian descriptive translation and neglecting existing Tatar phraseological equivalents.

The fact that the creative essence of W.Sheakespeare, G.Byron and R.Kipling's poetry is best revealed when poets use different types of PU transformations is stressed in the dissertation of Yu.Medvedev [22]. The result of the scholar's investigation is rather vivid: the translators resorted to two main principally different types of contextual translation. The first type demonstrates that the sense which the PU acquired in the original text was rendered without distortion; in the second type of translation the construction in the translated text developed some additional, contextually stipulated senses as a result of compression of the original text units in the process of translation. In such a case the main aim of translator wasn't the exact reproduction of the author's transformation but the aspiration for rendering the idea expressed in the original text with the help of such transformation. On the whole the following ways of PU translation were

recommended: compensation, modulation, remetaphorization.

In the analysis of Russian and Spanish translations of W.Collins' works, A.Kayumova singles out the most frequent errors made by translators while rendering modified PUs from English into Russian and Spanish and puts forward a training algorithm for translating modified PUs to avoid similar mistakes [23].

The analysis of several works of researchers indicates the great significance of this problem in the theoretical aspect and the necessity of finding the most adequate ways of translation of PU occasional modifications (using another term, transformations) for practical purposes. This problem becomes complicated by the idiomaticity of PUs as the success of their translation stands and falls with the degree to which idiomaticity is retained or distorted.

Ways of translating complex PU modifications in the novel of S. Rushdie *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

In this article we demonstrate the difficulty of translating contextually modified PUs by comparing PUs taken from the novel of S.Rushdie *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* [24] and their functional equivalents in the Russian translation by V.Tooblin [25].

The author's deployment of PUs in his work is obviously intentional. The author skillfully plays with phraseological form and meaning. Modifications refer to both local and global portions of the text. Therefore, after the identification of a PU modification, it is essential for a translator to determine why the author puts the given PU into the mouth of this or that character and how the modification influences the text.

This article examines the most complex cases of contextual use of PUs, i.e. phraseological pun, extended phraseological metaphor and phraseological saturation of discourse.

Phraseological pun

In phraseology, pun implies the interplay of the figurative meaning of a PU and the literal meaning of its free word combination. For example:

And while the Shadow behaved in this agitated fashion, Mudra himself retreated a few steps, leant on a tree-stump and pretended to have grown very bored indeed, examining his fingernails, yawning, **twiddling his thumbs**. [24: 134]

The PU "twiddle one's thumbs" means to do nothing for a period of time, usually while you are waiting for something to happen; in fact, one can twiddle or twirl his/her thumbs literally. In this very case both figurative and literal meanings are

important because the character of the novel, Mudra, communicates with the Language of Gesture.

The interplay of the two meanings is not present in the Russian translation; literally:

And while the Shadow was in such an excited state, Mudra, moving away a few steps, leant against a tree and pretended to be bored to death – examined his nails, yawned and **in every way showed strong indifference**. [25]

Extended phraseological metaphor

Extended phraseological metaphor is "characterised by a spread of phraseological meaning; thus, it is not a single metaphor but a string of sub-images creating associative metaphors tied together, covering an entire area of experience" [11: 80]. For example:

'[...] Honestly, Hoopoe, **pull yourself together**.'

'How to **pull myself, together or anywhere else**,' Butt the Hoopoe lamented without moving his beak, 'when other persons, Chupwala persons, are pulling me wherever they desire?' [24: 145].

In this example extended phraseological metaphor goes together with phraseological reiteration and phraseological pun, therefore it is a challenge to render this stretch of text properly. Let us give the Russian variant of translation; literally:

— Honestly, Hoopoe, **take yourself in hands**.

— How can I **take myself in hands, if someone else's hands have already grabbed all of us** – complained Butt the Hoopoe without opening his beak. – If these hands are already dragging me wherever they want? [25]

The translator managed to preserve all the modifications: the sub-images of the Russian PU go back to the base image "hands", promoting and developing metaphorical links, which constitute a network of related figurative items.

Phraseological saturation

A.Naciscione notes that the dominant characteristic of the instantial phraseological saturation of discourse is "... the interfusion of several PUs which are exploited in one stretch of text, blending and intermingling. The PUs and their instantial constituents pervade the text, resulting in a subtle network of phraseological ties" [11: 151].

In S.Rushdie's novel there are numerous examples of phraseological saturation.

We single out one subtype of phraseological saturation which involves the interfusion of two or more synonymic PUs in one stretch of text. This kind of instantial stylistic use of PUs was first described in the article "Phraseological reiteration and its functions" [26], where the term

synonymic phraseological reiteration was proposed. Let us illustrate this pattern:

- (a) **'Hold your horses,'** said the Water Genie. 'Cool down, don't **blow your top, keep your hair on.** [...]' [24: 68].
- (b) **'Up the creek, pretty pickle, had our chips,'** Iff disconsolately remarked. [24: 145].

In both extracts the PUs employed form a string of synonyms. PUs "hold your horses", "blow your top" and "keep your hair on" are expressions telling people to stop doing something; in this case, stop being so angry. PUs "up the creek", "be in a pretty pickle" and "have had your chips" mean being in trouble.

The above-mentioned pattern is employed several times in the text; therefore, it is possible to conclude that it refers not only to the local stretch of text, but to the whole text and performs a macro function as it gives a global indirect characterization of the character, the Water Genie, called Iff.

From the novel we learn that The Water Genie comes from Kahani, the earth's second moon. Kahani, to be more exact its Sea of Stories, is where all of stories originate. Iff, being responsible for taking care of the Story Water, is extremely talkative. He can substitute each word used for two or more synonyms of phraseological character. This stylistic device represents this particular character and illuminates his particular traits.

It is doubtless that the translation of the extracts containing such a device is a challenge to a translator's skills; however, with a certain element of imagination and creativity the Russian translator partially manages to render them into Russian; literally:

- (a) — **Hold your horses,** – ordered the Water Genie. – Cool down. **Don't wind up.** [25]
- (b) — **Caught, stuck, now a chop will be made of us,** – said Iff resignedly. [25]

In the first case, the informal PU "hold your horses" was rendered with the help of a phraseological equivalent; the informal PU "blow your top", used in a negative order, was translated with the help of an informal verb "wind up" with a negative particle (i.e. Don't get into a state); the informal PU "keep your hair on" was omitted.

In the second case, the informal PU "up the creek" was rendered with the help of the informal verb "caught"; the shortened form of the original PU "be in a pretty pickle" was rendered with the help of the informal verb "stuck"; the shortened form of the original informal PU "have had your chips" was rendered with the help of the informal phraseological

analogue "a chop will be made of us" (i.e. we will be beaten severely).

Not all of the phraseological synonyms found their phraseological counterparts in the Russian translation; however, all the counterparts given are synonyms and all of them are informal.

Conclusions

Having analyzed complex PU modifications in the novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and their functional counterparts, it was proved that PU modifications present a challenge to translators of fiction.

Despite the presence of some inaccuracies in the translation of PU modifications from English into Russian, the counterparts under analysis generally meet the basic requirements of adequacy.

Nevertheless, there cannot be a single right answer (i.e. counterpart) when rendering PU modifications from the source language into the target language. It is a creative process which requires complete understanding of the connection between a specific PU modification and discourse as a whole.

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